



A better life: It can start with better health

TRI-CITY CITIZENS UNION FOR PROGRESS, INC.

If we think of urban blight as an earthquake with an epicenter, then the 12-block area near Newark's western border would have to be on its immediate fringe. At the center of the tremor that shook Newark a decade ago there are still empty lots. But along South 19th Street few houses are gutted. There is about the neighborhood the air of shabby gentility; it is that of an elderly gentleman in a worn but mended overcoat. The small stores that sold to whites who traced their roots to south and central Europe are now bodegas, and if the customer is not Spanish-speaking the customer is black.

If this fringe does not slide into the general decay that afflicts our major cities, an organization called the Tri-City Citizens Union for Progress may well be the reason.

Tri-City is attempting to knit two disparate populations—black and Spanish-speaking—into one community dealing simultaneously with housing needs, health problems and preschool programs.

Tri-City began the task of rescuing neighborhoods and the people in them from destruction in 1967 in three cities, Paterson, Jersey City and Newark. Only the Newark effort managed to survive. Today, Tri-City is the agent for some 96 families bonded in a co-operative called Amity Village I and is the owner agent for Amity 2A, where some 200 families hope to have a similar co-operative by 1978. The 67 buildings in both villages are mostly three family structures, with a sprinkling of small apartment houses. In addition to adequate housing the objective is stability—75% of the original tenants are still in residence.

Government subsidies permit Tri-City to offer a three-bedroom apartment that might cost \$230 elsewhere for \$160 a month. While \$160 seems modest, the median income in Tri-City's area is not quite \$7200 a year. An accountant who stops by regularly each year to volunteer his time to help with income tax problems shakes his head in disbelief, as he emerges from a day's labor. "I'm working here with what you're calling 'middle-



income' families. That's \$12,000 a year with both parents working. That's middle income?"

Wages are not all that march to a different drummer in Newark. The rehabilitation was done with local craftsmen, to make up for the service industries whose members refuse to work in that city. Tri-City established its own construction company, trained the workers, and refurbished sound dwellings. Once they were habitable, the co-operative concept provided a sound basis for involvement for residents. Tri-City moved on to establish a pre-school education project.

In 1973 Tri-City began to deal with the next most pervasive ill of the cities—poor health. Aware that low income groups have had indifferent success in public health facilities, Tri-City launched a block worker plan, reaching out to residents in homes and apartments, following up to insure continued interest and response. There was no question of need. More than 10% of Newark's residents have hypertension. Newarkers also have the highest infant mortality rate in the state—nearly 18 of every 1,000 babies born is born dead—and the highest active case incidence of tuberculosis, 25,000 plus, in the nation.

Tri-City established a health education program centered in the clinic. Julia Scott, a trim transplanted New Englander who has been a nurse for 17 years, lives in Newark. She designs medical training workshops in New York. Once a week she's a volunteer at Tri-City's clinic in a

This is Rebecca Andrade, executive director of the Tri-City Citizens Union for Progress. The agency is opening doors to a world of better housing and better health for Newark residents. ◀

Dr. Kenneth Marius is at Tri-City's Clinic each Saturday for examinations in follow-up work in the agency's concentration on preventive health care. ▶

Practicing what you preach is a good lesson in health circles. Nurse Julia Scott gets some data here on the health of a colleague, Hazel Clarke, the clinic's health co-ordinator. ▼



converted home on South Nineteenth Street. Here the concentration is on women and children. Listen to Ms. Scott:

"We had this 42-year-old woman who told us her friend had experienced vaginal bleeding just before she got cancer. Our visitor had been bleeding every two weeks for a year, and she was really scared. She'd been going to a doc-



tor but he'd never done a hemoglobin count—would you believe it?—and told her she was bleeding because she was too fat. She was—about four feet ten inches and nearly 250 pounds. He was trying to intimidate her into losing weight."

"We found out she was very anemic, and whatever surgery she needed would have to wait. Her diet was terrible; three cheese sandwiches—maybe another of salami—for breakfast, that sort of thing. We got her on a diet, and two weeks later she was beaming—all the depression was gone. She'd lost six pounds, and she'd put her husband and eight children



on a diet—they were all overweight, too. That's very courageous, you know; the Spanish are very strong-willed, and turning a husband around on something as basic as diet takes guts."

The clinic deals with a wide spectrum of basic health exams and attempts to bring a new concept of treatment to those it serves. There are no hospital-white uniforms, and the walls are bright yellow. Ms. Scott: "So many of our people are intimidated by medical people. They don't know why they're taking the medicine they're taking—or ignoring—nor what side effects can do to them. There's a lot of high blood pressure around, and a lot of medication for it.

One woman was upset about losing her interest in sex, until I told her that's a side effect and not uncommon for those on high blood pressure medication."

The toughest problem face the Spanish speaking women; Tri-City often sends a helper along to doctors or hospitals to make sure the women understand everything they need to know.

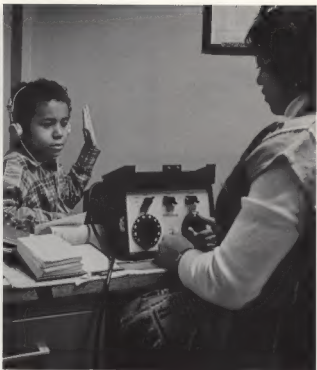
The clinic is concentrating on nutritional information, to build a health preventive program into the community. "Most of us are crisis-oriented," says Becky Andrade, Tri-City's executive director, "and for the people in this area, that's not good. We've got one group practice, including a dentist, in this entire 12-block area. For most of the residents, the hospital is a two-bus trip. A preventive system can reduce that 'crisis-orientation,' and diet is the key to the preventive system. We're getting the word out that eating better can mean feeling better."



Communications is vital in Tri-City's preventive program. At a rap session are, left to right, Hazel Clarke, health co-ordinator; Julia Scott, gynecologist nurse practitioner; Mercedes Perkins, pediatrics nurse practitioner; Thonessa Simmons and Lottie McKelvey, block health workers; Dr. Kenneth Marius, medical adviser and Deborah Booker. <j>

Tri-City's efforts to keep the smiles of its children healthy means a thorough evaluation of the physical condition of its young residents, including hearing ability, and regular follow-up interviews.

Meanwhile, down the street from the clinic, Tri-City's day school is in session in a building that once was an Ukrainian church. Latin-Americans and Afro-Americans are learning each other's songs, trying each other's food and speaking each other's language. It is lunchtime, and everyone is sitting down to tuna casserole, and someone asks Mercedes Fernandez, a teacher, about a bright-eyed little black girl who has asked for and gotten a second helping. "That's Felicia Evans," she says. "Felicia always has a fine appetite. She will be five, on January 9." When a teacher knows her children's birthdays, you get the comfortable feeling that she is very good at what she does.



Profile:

REBECCA ANDRADE

**AGENCY:
TRI-CITY CITIZENS
UNION FOR PROGRESS, INC**

Rebecca Doggett Andrade was at her desk in the headquarters of the Tri-City Citizens Union for Progress, an old house set back from South Nineteenth Street in Newark's West Ward, explaining Tri-City to a visitor. Her telephone rang. The caller wanted to read her a letter going out on the agency's behalf. "Yes, yes," she said, "that sounds all right." She listened for a moment, then said, "No, don't let the letter say that. Say 'it is imperative that a decision be forthcoming immediately.' Give them a week and you won't hear for two months."

It was a letter to a state agency, and Becky Andrade was putting into practice one of the bits of knowledge that she has learned in the Kafka-like world of bureaus and commissions, administrations and corporations. Becky Andrade is 36, looks 26, and has spent exactly half her life in the public sector.

She is the executive director of Tri-City, running the operations of something very close to an experiment in how to survive in the urban forest. Her husband, Edward Andrade, a founding member, oversees the economic end of the agency.

They met in Orange, Becky was an 18-year-old Upsala College student and within a year would be running the campaign for a candidate who was seeking election to the Orange city commission. He was relocation director for the Orange Housing Authority. The only other black in city government, Becky says, "was the dogcatcher." Rebecca Andrade was furious that a black of some stature, Ernie Thompson, opposed her candidate. Thompson, a pragmatic man, told her her man couldn't win. He didn't. Thompson's

man did. Thompson would become a founding member of Tri-City and its chief adviser. Volunteers drawn by his power are still at work, and his name sprinkles conversations at the agency, six years after his death.

Getting the cumbersome machinery of government behind a project like Tri-City—the holding together of part of a city crumbling before the very eyes of government—is not an easy task, but it appears to be one for which Becky Andrade was designed.

She helped form the United Community Corporation, an anti-poverty agency in Newark. She was the chairperson for Crusade for Learning, the community-based educational organization that was the advisory committee to a tutorial program that began in the summer of 1967 in Newark. For three years she was executive director of the Newark Pre-School Council, administering a staff of 275 in a Head Start Program for 1,800 children, a council of which she was the founding president. For 18 months she was consultant and project director of an adult education program funded by the U.S. Office of Education at Rio Piedras,

Puerto Rico, through the University of Puerto Rico's extension division. She was a member of a delegation of 21 professionals in early childhood education to visit the People's Republic of China in 1975, to observe developments in that field.

But it is not the titles and the programs, responsible and significant as they are, that equip someone to deal with the issues that Tri-City faces in Newark. It is the ability to link programs and people.

Two women, for instance, mount the worn steps of Tri-City's headquarters and pause hesitantly in the door of Ms. Andrade's office. They ask in halting English about an apartment and the director begins to answer in English, then slips easily into Spanish, and the women's faces brighten. "Ah, you have five children, you'll need at least three bedrooms, but there is a long list," Becky Andrade says. One woman is perhaps five years older than the director but she



looks twenty years older, and Mrs. Andrade leads her to a desk where a bilingual clerk can take some information.

Down the street, an hour later, Becky sits in a luncheonette where pastrami was a popular sandwich among the Poles and Ukrainians who once worked and lived in the neighborhood. A Puerto Rican man and his wife bought the place. Pastrami is still popular, and they have caught the art of keeping it hot and flavorful. As Becky munches her sandwich, she glances at a small child, bright-eyed and inquisitive, and trailing her fingers along the tables. Three blocks away her counterparts are in a Tri-City day school.

"Hi, Yvette," Becky says, her own eyes bright behind huge glasses that seem to cover half her face. The child smiles, and Becky says, "I've been trying to get her parents to put her into the school, but they like her here with them." She looks at the child, weighing her potential, and thinking about what Tri-City can do for her. "We'll get her, one day," she says.

Rebecca Andrade greets some young Newarkers at the day care center which Tri-City operates. ▽



We believe that CITIES CAN BE REDEEMED through the achievement of the following goals:

1. Economic development of the community
2. Education of children and adults for the world of work
3. Greater awareness of the cultural heritages of the community
4. Wider civic participation
5. General community rehabilitation

Won't you help us?

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